

she protested, she entreated. Finally she burst into tears, and appealed to Lord Hawbury in the most moving terms. Hawbury listened very gravely, with his eyes wandering over to where Ethel was; and Ethel caught the expression of his face, and looked quite confused.

"Oh, think, only think," said Mrs. Willoughby, after an eloquent and pathetic appeal—"think how this poor child will be talked about!"

"Well, really—ah—upon my life," said Hawbury, with his eyes still wandering over toward Ethel, "I'm sure I don't—ah—share your views altogether, Mrs. Willoughby; for—ah—there are times, you know, when a fellow finds it very uncommonly desirable—runaway matches, you know, and all that sort of thing. And, by Jove! to tell the truth, I really admire the idea, by Jove! And really—ah—I'm sure—I wish most confoundedly it was the universal fashion, by Jove!"

"But she'll be so talked about. She'll make herself so shockingly conspicuous."

"Conspicuous? By Jove!" said Hawbury, who seemed struck by the idea. At that moment Minnie began talking to her sister, and Hawbury went off to Ethel, to whom he began talking in the most earnest manner. The two wandered off for some distance, and did not return for a full half hour. When they did return Ethel looked somewhat embarrassed, and Hawbury was radiant. With this radiance on his face he went up to Mrs. Willoughby, leaving Ethel in the background.

"Oh, by-the-way," said he, "you were remarking that your sister would be too conspicuous by such a hasty marriage."

"Yes," said Mrs. Willoughby, anxiously.

"Well, I thought I would tell you that she needn't be so very conspicuous; for, in fact—that is, you know, Ethel and I—she told you, I suppose, about our mistake?"

"Oh yes."

"And I think I've persuaded her to save Minnie from being too conspicuous."

Mrs. Willoughby gave Hawbury a look of astonishment and reproach.

"You!" she cried; "and Ethel!"

"Why, I'm sure, we're the very ones you might expect it from. Think how infernally we've been humbugged by fate."

"Fate!" said Mrs. Willoughby. "It was all your own fault. She was chosen for you."

"Chosen for me? What do you mean?"

"By your mother."

"My mother?"

"Yes."

"She said one of Biggs's nieces."

"Ethel is that niece."

"The devil!" cried Hawbury. "I beg pardon. By Jove!"

Hawbury, overwhelmed by this, went back to Ethel, and they wandered off once more. The Baron had already wandered off with Minnie

in another direction. Tozer and the priest had gone to survey the house.

Seeing Mrs. Willoughby thus left alone, Dacres drifted up to her. He came up silently.

"Kitty," said he, in a low voice, "you seem sad."

By which familiar address it will be seen that Dacres had made some progress toward intimacy with her.

Mrs. Willoughby did not seem at all offended at this, but looked up with one of her frankest smiles, and the clouds of perplexity passed away. She was an exceedingly pretty woman, and she was certainly not over twenty-four.

"I'm so worried," she said, plaintively.

"What's the matter?" asked Dacres, in a tone of the deepest and tenderest sympathy.

"Why, these horrid men; and, what's worse, Lord Hawbury is actually encouraging Mr.—the—'the Baron; and I'm so worried. Oh dear!"

"But why should you be worried?"

"It's so horrid. It's shocking. It's not to be thought of."

"But why not?" asked Dacres.

"Why, it's—it's so horrid," said Mrs. Willoughby.

Dacres stood looking at her for a long time.

"Kitty," said he at last.

Mrs. Willoughby looked up.

Dacres looked all around. He then took her hand.

"Isn't it too bad," he said, "to let Minnie—"

"What?"

"To let her go through this ordeal alone?"

"Alone!" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby, looking in wonder at him.

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"Couldn't we accompany her?"

Mrs. Willoughby snatched away her hand.

"Are you mad?" she cried. "I do believe the whole world's mad to-day."

"Mad!" cried Dacres. "Yes, I'm mad—insane—raving! Won't you be merciful again? Won't you, Kitty? Won't you 'honor' my ravings? Oh, do. Oh, Kitty! dear Kitty!"

"It's positive insanity!"

"Oh, Kitty!"

"You're raving!"

"Won't you 'honor' me—just this once! only this once."

"Hush! there they come," said Mrs. Willoughby, suddenly snatching away her hand, which Dacres had somehow got hold of again, and moving a little further away from him.

It was the Baron and Minnie who were coming back again, while Hawbury and Ethel were seen a little further away.

There they all stood—there, on the spot where they had found the crisis of their fortunes; and as they stood there the two clergymen, Catholic and Protestant, slowly came out of the house.